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ABSTRACT

These guidelines are intended to help New York State school districts: (1) develop procedures for identifying gifted students and (2) use the information obtained through identification procedures as a basis for deciding how educational programs and services can be modified to serve the students. Initial sections of the manual define giftedness and consider a philosophy of gifted education. Organizational aspects addressed include establishment of an identification team, identification of sources of data, and orientation of the staff. The identification process itself is described in terms of screening, referral, and in-depth assessment. A note on the realities of providing gifted education briefly explores the negative impact of limited resources on the identification process. (CL)

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IDENTIFYING GIFTED STUDENTS
Guidelines for School Districts

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GIFTED EDUCATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234
SEPTEMBER 1983

IDENTIFYING GIFTED STUDENTS

Guidelines for School Districts

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The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Gifted Education
Albany, New York 12234

September 1983

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FOREWORD

As programs for gifted students have expanded in New York State, a concern has grown about the adequacy of practices used to select students for those programs. There is a concern that some gifted students may be overlooked. There is a concern that the most commonly used practices a. not sensitive to the ways in which giftedness may be expressed by minority students, those who are economically disadvantaged, the handicapped, culturally different individuals, and females. There is a less widespread concern that some students may be placed in special programs that are inappropriate for them.

This manual is intended to provide assistance to school districts as they develop procedures for identifying gifted students. There is also an emphasis on using information obtained through identification procedures as a basis for deciding how educational programs and services can be modified most appropriately to serve the students.

The major portion of the work of developing this manual was done by a task force of State Education Department personnel and coordinated by the staff of the unit on Gifted Education.

Comments or questions regarding this manual should be directed to:

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to give guidance to districts in developing procedures to identify gifted students. The manual describes the components of an identification program and offers suggestions for establishing such a program.

The development of this manual required a balancing of several conflicting factors. An attempt was made to keep the document brief while still including enough information to cover the topic adequately. The document is intended to be general enough to apply in many different situations but specific enough to provide guidance on some details of a program. An attempt was made to withhold judgments about the appropriateness of various practices, except where a statement of position seemed important from an educational, legal, or technical standpoint.

The manual presents the state definition of giftedness as a basis for planning programs for gifted students. It emphasizes the need for a district to develop a philosophy of gifted education. It then presents various aspects of identifying gifted students and describes procedures for a district to follow. Some of the procedures are mandated by law and are identified as such. Others are recommended, based on experience or on good educational practice. Next, there is a discussion of realities that conflict with the development of ideal identification procedures.

Finally, there is a summary of the procedures being recommended to districts. The summary presents step-by-step actions a district can take to identify gifted students. It can serve as a quick reference for districts as they develop an identification process. The summary of procedures begins on page 16.

Several terms are used with specific meanings in this manual. They are defined below.

Identification is the overall process of finding and selecting students for programs for the gifted.

Screening is the initial step in the process of identifying gifted students. It is designed to call attention to students who are thought, for whatever reason, to be gifted.

Referral is the process of getting students into the in-depth assessment phase of identification.

In-depth assessment is that part of the identification process in which information is obtained to make a decision about the most appropriate program for each student.

DEFINITION OF GIFTEDNESS

Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982 defines gifted pupils as "pupils who show evidence of high performance capability and exceptional potential in areas such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential."

This broad definition is the foundation on which the identification of gifted students in New York State rests. A school district's philosophy of gifted education, identification practices, and program should be consistent with the State definition.

The definition allows districts a great deal of latitude. For example, use of the phrase, "such as," indicates that giftedness can extend to areas other than "general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude, and outstanding ability in the visual and performing arts." In addition, the definition permits each district to determine the kinds of data to be used and procedures to be followed in identifying gifted students.

DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF GIFTED EDUCATION

The philosophy by which a district operates its gifted program will affect the identification process. The definition of giftedness and the philosophy of gifted education provide guidance for the program. The definition describes the characteristics of gifted students. The philosophy presents the values guiding the operation of the program. The district should provide this latter guiding element by developing a written statement of philosophy for gifted education.

The philosophy should state the purposes of the program for gifted students. It should describe the value of the program to the students, district, community, State, and society in general. In short, the philosophy should give the reasons for the existence of the program. In addition, the philosophy should indicate the guiding principles within which the district will determine the eligibility of students.

A district has a number of precedents and resources to call on in developing its philosophy. Traditionally in New York State, we have vigorously supported artistic, scientific, business, and governmental endeavors. The human resources for these spheres of activity depend on the quality of education. A dynamic school system which responds to the needs of a diverse population is essential to the fulfillment of human potential. The many gifted students in our schools, now and in the future, will benefit from programs and services designed for them, and, as they benefit, society becomes the recipient of their enhanced contributions.

The philosophy of gifted education can emphasize the potential contributions of gifted individuals, without minimizing the contributions of any member of society. Undiscovered or uncultivated abilities may not develop to their fullest without explicit recognition and nurturing by society through its educational system.

It goes without saying that the philosophy will provide a framework which will allow any gifted student -- regardless of group membership, gender, or background -- to be identified and selected for the program. The philosophy will encourage identification procedures which are sound educationally and psychometrically.

The district should consider ways of capturing the ideas and values of the community as it develops its philosophy. The New York State Commissioner of Education appointed an Advisory Council on Education for the Gifted to fulfill this function at the State level.

ORGANIZING TO IDENTIFY GIFTED STUDENTS

The district will need to develop a plan for identifying gifted students. Planning is necessary to assure that identification is carried out effectively, that appropriate data are available, and that the staff is involved in a constructive way. Major considerations are discussed below.

Establishing an Identification Team

A team should be established to plan and coordinate the identification of gifted students. The team should include district personnel and might also include someone from the community, a parent of a student, or some other interested citizen.

How much of the identification process the team will carry out itself and how much will be done by other individuals or groups is a decision to be made at the district level. The identification team will be responsible for assuring that the process is carried out equitably and properly, whether the team itself or someone else carries out the specific activities.

One or more members of the identification team should have a background in testing and measurement, experience in teaching the gifted and a sensitivity to the needs of culturally diverse students. In districts with large populations of culturally different students, the team should include staff members who are representative of those populations.

Identifying Sources of Data

Data from a variety of sources should be used to screen and identify students who may be gifted. Students may be gifted in many different ways. If the identification process focuses on one or two characteristics, students with other kinds of gifts will almost inevitably be overlooked. For example, if giftedness is defined as a high level of general ability (and only that), a student with extraordinary gifts in a particular area but rather ordinary abilities in others may not be identified as gifted.

Different types of data can be used to complement one another. Test data may inadequately assess certain abilities which are not readily expressed in a formal testing situation. Teachers' observations, on the other hand, can be particularly sensitive to the nuances of students' behavior, although they may be less reliable psychometrically than tests. There is substantial evidence that, if any one source of data is used by itself, a significant proportion of gifted students may be overlooked. Therefore, information should be gathered from a variety of sources. These may include:

- group or individual intelligence tests
- aptitude tests
- achievement tests
- creativity tests
- rating scales, filled out by teachers, parents, peers, or self
- anecdotal records
- personality inventories
- interest inventories
- records of counselors and others who have frequent contact with the student
- observation of actual performance and special skills
- commercially or locally developed screening devices
- interviews with parents
- peer judgment, including sociometric devices
- teachers' nominations or ratings
- parents' nominations or ratings
- biographical and autobiographical information
- pupils' products and work samples
- case studies

Data from these and possibly other sources may be obtained through the regular testing program, the required screening of students entering the public schools for the first time, and the records of transfer students. In addition, the Committee on the Handicapped may be a rich source of data about giftedness of students who may also be handicapped.

Teachers and other staff members should be alerted to look for subtle clues which might suggest that a pupil may be gifted, even though these clues are not a part of a formal screening process. Such clues might include: the ability to see

complex or unusual relationships; an unusual sense of humor, especially humor that uses puns or unusual associations; intense interests, mature interests, or a wide range of interests; deep concern for the feelings of others or for social issues; a large and diverse vocabulary; the ability to see the essential elements of a situation; and recognition by others of the student as a leader, as an expert in some area (not necessarily a school subject), or as an important contributor to the school, class, or social group.

Data such as that described above will be used in two components of the identification process: the initial screening and the in-depth assessment. Since these two components serve different functions, the ways data are used in carrying out those functions will be somewhat different.

Screening is intended to locate any student in the pupil population who may possibly be gifted. To accomplish this, data providing evidence of various kinds of giftedness should be sought. Data may come from the district's testing programs; students' performance and accomplishments in class and out; students' products; nominations by teachers, administrators, parents, or others; or any other source of information on students' characteristics. The screening data are used to decide which students warrant in-depth assessment.

In-depth assessment is the stage at which decisions are made about what kinds of educational programs will be most beneficial for each student. Therefore, the data collected in the in-depth assessment should be appropriate for selecting students for gifted programs and, in addition, for determining the nature of the program a given student is to follow.

Technical Considerations

A major concern in using data from tests or other sources is the validity of the data for identifying gifted students. The validity of a test is the extent to which it measures what it is intended to measure or does the job for which it is used. Test manuals generally include evidence of validity. This evidence should be weighed in relation to the purposes for which the test will be used. A test which is valid for one purpose may not be valid for another. A test which is valid for one age group may not be valid for another. To what extent can the evidence of validity provided by the test producer be applied to your situation and purposes?

Unpublished instruments, including homemade instruments, may have no empirical evidence of validity. In such cases, the degree of validity must be judged primarily by the content of the instruments. Does the information obtained by an instrument relate to the program for which students are being identified?

A similar judgment must be made about data collected without use of instruments. This includes such information as grades, teachers' anecdotes, participation in extracurricular activities, and ratings of students' products. Of course, the more closely an item of information relates to the kind of activity students will carry on in a program, the more valid it is likely to be as an identification device.

The reliability of data from various sources is another important consideration. Reliability describes how consistently a test measures a student's performance. How likely is a student to get the same or similar scores if he or she takes a test twice? Obviously, the greater the reliability, the more useful the test in making decisions about students.

As with validity data, test manuals usually include evidence of reliability. The staff will want to use its judgment in determining both whether to use the instrument and also how to use the instrument, given its degree of reliability.

Unpublished instruments present problems if they have no reliability data available. Reliability studies can be conducted before using an instrument for screening. Realistically, this is often not feasible. An alternative is to compute reliability from data collected when the instrument is used to identify gifted students. This does not provide the luxury of knowing beforehand whether reliability is adequate to warrant use of the instrument; however, it does allow the use of reliability data in making decisions about students.

A number of measurement problems may occur in identifying gifted students, bias of testing instruments being one of the most serious. Although standardized tests are thought of as being "objective," a great deal of subjectivity goes into the selection of topics to be covered, the selection of items, and even the wording of items. Most tests are developed to serve the majority of pupils in the mainstream of our schools and our culture. Students who are different in some way may perform poorly, not because they are deficient in the ability supposedly measured, but because they do not respond to the test or testing situation as most students do. Therefore, tests should be examined for possible bias against students who are bilingual, culturally different, or economically disadvantaged. Where the district has difficulty finding tests in other than the English language, more weight should be given to other types of data, such as ratings of students' performance.

A second measurement problem stems from the fact that gifted students score high on many tests. When students score near the maximum possible (the "ceiling") on a test, the test does not do a good job of measuring their abilities, because we have no way of knowing what they could have scored if more difficult items were included on the test. One approach to dealing with this problem has been to test possibly gifted students with instruments developed for an older age group or higher grade level. This approach has proved successful in some instances. However, two possible disadvantages should be kept in mind. First, appropriate norms for this group of students are likely to be missing. Second, the test may include content to which the students have not been exposed. These disadvantages do not necessarily negate this approach but are presented to point out possible limitations of a given test under these circumstances.

Rating scales can be useful in identifying gifted pupils. They can supply information not available through traditional testing. Whether the scale is commercially published or developed locally, attention to several factors can help make the use of the scale more effective. The pupil characteristics to be rated

should be relevant to the purpose of the screening. Describe the characteristics clearly and in concrete terms. To the extent possible, the characteristics should be observable. For example, it is easier to rate the extent to which a student "works on tasks until they are completed" than it is to rate his or her "motivation." If possible, provide a verbal description of the different levels of a characteristic rather than simply having ratings from 1 to 5, from high to low, or from "very little" to "very much." The more precise the descriptions of each level of a characteristic, the more accurate the ratings are likely to be.

Before teachers fill out the rating scales, some training or orientation should be provided in order to develop a common frame of reference. One useful approach to training is to have the raters observe the same pupil, in a classroom or on videotape, and then complete a rating scale; differences between raters can then be discussed and resolved.

Parents and other adults who work with young people can also provide useful information through ratings. Since these individuals are not as readily available for inservice training, it is especially important to have a good rating instrument that avoids bias and ambiguity.

Measurement problems and other technica considerations cannot be adequately covered in a manual such as this. The identification team should have access to staff members with psychometric training and experience. The team can explore the possibilities of using other sources of measurement expertise, such as consultants available from universities or test publishers.

Orienting the Staff

The entire school district staff can contribute to the identification of gifted students. They can nominate students who might otherwise not be considered for gifted programs. The staff is a rich source of data to be used in screening and in-depth assessment, and members of the staff can participate in the selection of students to receive special services designed for the gifted.

Staff members have valuable information about students. Teachers have many opportunities to observe students and to appraise the products of students' activities. By orienting the staff to the gifted program and, in particular, to the process of identifying students for the program, this storehouse of information can be increased and used to supplement other kinds of information used in identifying gifted students.

Orienting the staff on the following topics can increase the value of the information they provide:

1. The purposes, organization, and activities of the district's program for the gifted.

2. Characteristics of gifted students.

3. Types of data individual staff members can provide to supplement test data and other objective data.

4. Ways of improving the recognition of giftedness among minorities, the economically disadvantaged, the handicapped, culturally different individuals, and females.

5. The need to search for gifted students whose gifts are not readily apparent from test scores or grades or are expressed in unusual ways.

THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The identification process has three major components:

1. Screening includes all the procedures a district uses to scan its student population to locate students who show evidence of possibly being gifted.

2. Referral is the process by which a pupil is brought to the attention of a member or members of the professional staff with a request to determine what information is needed to develop an appropriate educational program for that pupil.

3. In-depth assessment includes the methods a district uses to collect detailed information about students' characteristics, performance, and needs in order to provide appropriate programs for them.

The overall process is illustrated in the accompanying figure. The components are described on the following pages. The procedures are described as it is recommended they operate in the majority of districts. Variations in this basic process can be made to meet local needs and circumstances, as long as requirements of law are met.

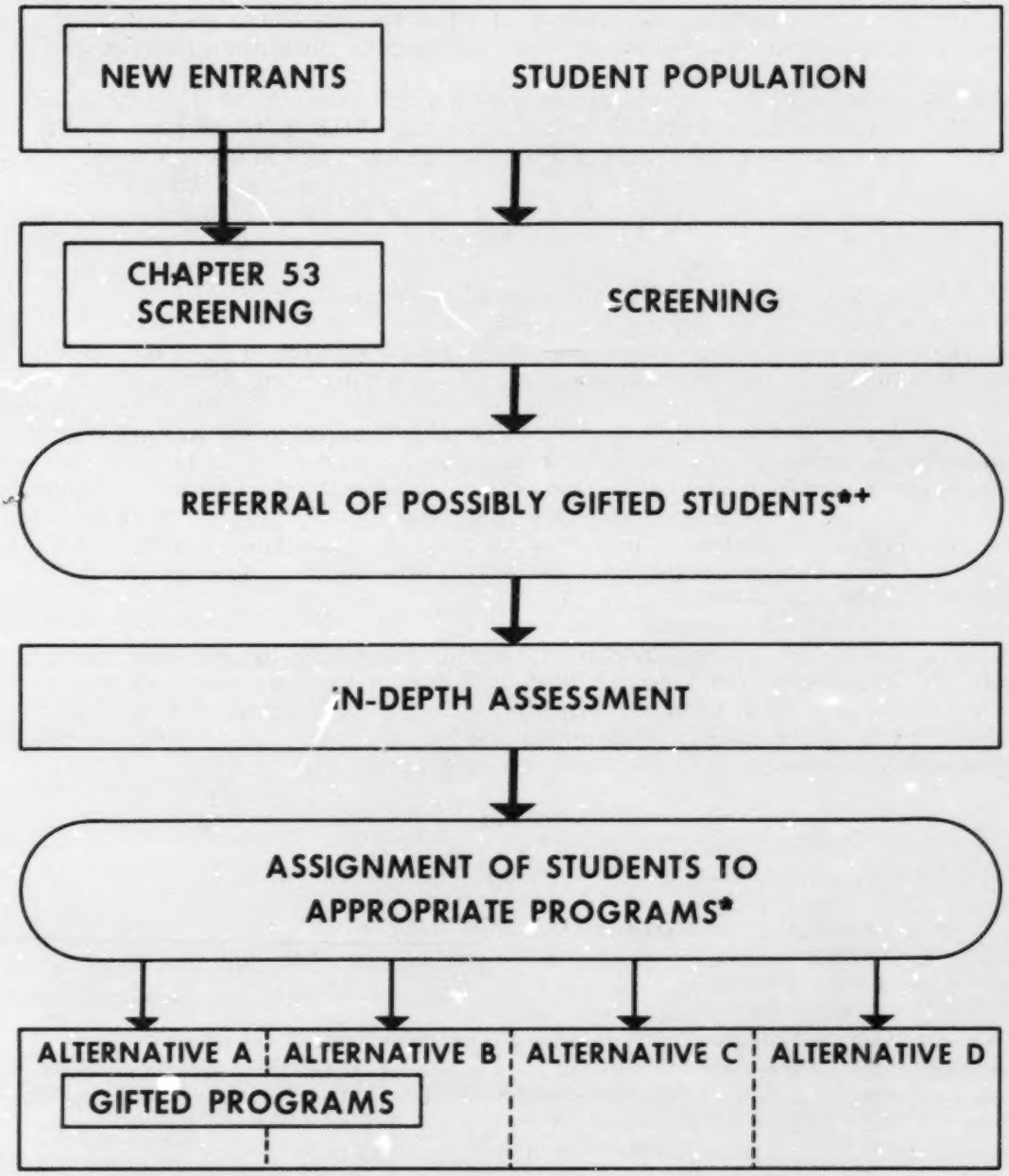
Screening

What is Screening?

Screening is the first step in the identification of gifted students. The purpose is to seek out students who should be studied in greater depth to determine the nature of their gifts.

Screening is intended to provide an overview of students' abilities and characteristics. Therefore, it should cover the widest range of academic and non-academic areas to assure that all possible areas of giftedness are tapped. Screening may include any means of obtaining evidence about the abilities, characteristics and needs of pupils. It may consist of such methods as: testing with standardized instruments or locally developed measures; nominations by staff members, parents, or other interested individuals; and assessments of students' products or performances.

THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS



* Notification of parent or guardian
+ Approval requested of parent or guardian

Screening requirements are different for different categories of students. A district is required by Chapter 53 of the Laws of 1980 to screen every student entering the public schools of New York State for the first time. This screening must be designed to identify tentatively those students who are gifted as well as those who are handicapped. The screening must be conducted in the student's native language.

For students other than new entrants, a district has a great deal of discretion about who will be screened and how. It is recommended that a district develop procedures for screening all students who are eligible for the gifted programs of the district by virtue of grade level, age, or other general criteria. In addition, an effective screening system should provide ongoing or periodic screening to enable the district to discover giftedness as it appears in a student at any time during the student's development over the years.

Since the screening system is intended to cover a large proportion of the student population, it should be economical in cost and in the time it requires of staff and students.

The district should scrutinize screening instruments and procedures to assure that they provide unbiased information on students.

Most "possibly gifted" students will probably be discovered through systematic efforts of the district to screen for giftedness, although some may be discovered through other means. For example, members of the staff, students, or parents may call attention to a possibly gifted student. A student transferring into the district may have participated in a gifted program in another district, or an outstanding product or performance by a student, in school or out, may be sufficient to add him or her to the pool of possibly gifted students who will receive further appraisal. The important point to be made here is that a number of sources of information may suggest that a student might be gifted. It is not necessary to restrict the evidence to that obtained through a formal process.

Suggested Procedures for Screening

As indicated above, screening should include a number of ways of discovering students who may be gifted. The procedures described below may help assure that there is a systematic means of finding students to be considered for gifted programs.

The population to be screened should be determined. This may be all students at a particular grade level, as one example. For the legally mandated screening, it must include all new students who have not previously attended public school in New York State. The district should determine other categories of students to be screened, depending on the grade levels and types of programs for the gifted.

The types of data to be used in screening should be selected. Sources of data have been discussed earlier. From the sources of data available, those to be used in screening should be economical to collect.

It is important to have a plan for collecting and recording data. The plan should describe what is to be done and who is responsible for each activity. Criteria must be developed to be used in determining which pupils are possibly gifted. The criteria must accomplish two seemingly contradictory purposes. They will help reduce the number of pupils who will be assessed in depth. On the other hand, the criteria must be sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to include any pupil who might be thought to be gifted. Where there is doubt, it is recommended that the pupil be included among those referred for in-depth assessment.

Once these preparations are made, the data will be collected and compiled. On the basis of the assembled data, and using the criteria previously developed, those students who may possibly be gifted will be selected and referred for further assessment.

Referral

A pupil should be referred for in-depth assessment when there is reason to believe that he or she may benefit from a gifted program. Referral may be initiated in several ways:

1. Through the screening required by Chapter 53 of the Laws of 1980.

2. By a parent, teacher, or administrator according to Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982.

3. Through other screening mechanisms the district may establish.

In establishing referral procedures, the district should specify the information desired in a written referral. The district should also indicate the individual or group to whom referrals should be made; for new entrants found to be possibly gifted, this must include the superintendent, as required by Chapter 53 of the Laws of 1980.

When a pupil has been referred through any of the three ways listed above, the district must, under Chapter 740, notify his or her parent or guardian. In addition, the district must request approval of the parent or guardian to conduct the in-depth assessment used to determine the pupil's eligibility to participate in a gifted program. If the parent or guardian does not approve, the pupil must not be assessed further or participate in a gifted program.

When the referral process has been completed, the district will have a list of possibly gifted students whose parents or guardians: (1) have been informed of the referral; and (2) have given approval for their children to be assessed further and, if eligible, placed in a gifted program. These are the students who will be assessed in depth.

In-depth Assessment

What Is In-depth Assessment?

In-depth assessment of possibly gifted students is intended to provide the data needed to make decisions about the kinds of programs that would be most appropriate for the students. The major outcome of in-depth assessment is the selection of gifted students for special programs and services. However, the variety of data produced by in-depth assessment should also be useful in planning programs and services for students. This applies to those selected for special programming for the gifted as well as those who will be best served in a regular program. Thus, the entire instructional program can benefit from in-depth assessment of possibly gifted students.

How does in-depth assessment differ from screening? First, the purposes are different. In-depth assessment is intended to select gifted students on the basis of the best evidence it is feasible to assemble. Screening, as described earlier, is designed to locate students who may possibly be gifted.

In-depth assessment is more thorough than screening. Detailed information is sought in order to make important decisions about the kinds of programs and services students will receive. The decisions will have a direct impact on the students and should therefore be based on the best information available.

It needs to be emphasized that in-depth assessment is more than administering a series of tests to select some students and reject others. The process is one of documenting the individual characteristics of each student in order to decide how educational programs and services can be modified most appropriately to serve the students. The essential element throughout the identification process is professional judgment. Test results and other information are simply tools to be used in making judgments. The most important task of the school district in this process is to establish procedures and guides to assemble the best evidence possible and use it in a fair and skillful manner.

Suggested Procedures for In-depth Assessment

The school district staff will go through several steps in preparing for and carrying out in-depth assessment. The steps will include stating the broad criteria to be used, determining the kinds of information required by each criterion, and establishing procedures for making decisions about individual students.

The broad criteria stated by the staff will describe the areas within which characteristics of students will be assessed. The criteria might include a high level of general intellectual ability, outstanding performance in specific subject areas, unusually creative production in certain art forms, or performance in other areas of human functioning. The criterion for mathematical ability, for example, might be stated somewhat as follows: "Students will be selected for the mathematics

program for gifted students if their mathematical ability is sufficiently high to require a special program in order to develop their full potential."

The staff will decide next what kinds of information are required to assess the characteristics and needs of students against these broad criteria. In most instances, information of several different kinds is desirable in order to give students varied opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities.

Then, the staff will decide how the various kinds of evidence will be used in placing students in appropriate programs or in modifying programs to more adequately meet the students' needs. For the specific task of selecting students for gifted programs, several recommendations are offered:

1. Form a selection team. This team may or may not be the team which manages the overall identification process. It should include people who are familiar with your program as well as the nature of giftedness. The considered judgment of such a group is likely to be the fairest and most sensitive way of selecting students for gifted programs.

2. Assemble the evidence. This should be done in such a way that all the information on a pupil is easily accessible in order that selection decisions will be based on all the evidence considered together. Compiling the data in a matrix is a frequently used approach, although the common practice of establishing a fixed cut-off point on the matrix scores can raise questions of fairness to students grouped closely around the cut-off point.

3. Avoid inflexible cut-off scores on tests. They assume a precision which tests do not possess. The difference in abilities of students scoring just above and those scoring just below the cut-off score is not meaningful.

4. Provide opportunities for unusual evidence of giftedness to be considered. Giftedness often expresses itself in different ways in different people.

5. Base selections on a variety of evidence. The evidence is likely to include test results; information about students' school performance and products; and information provided by teachers, parents, other students, and the student being studied.

6. Code the data on individual students so that selections are made without knowing the student's name, gender, race, or other irrelevant characteristics. This can reduce bias in the selection.

7. Place responsibility for final decisions on the judgment of the selection team rather than completely on a system of ranking students by scores or ratings. Such systems have the advantage of apparent objectivity, but they tend to force students into the same mold. The characteristics of a

given student may be best assessed by an instrument that is not appropriate for other students. The selection team must decide how to use such unique information as well as evidence coming from an unexpected source outside the formal in-depth assessment process. The selection team should have the flexibility to select students, regardless of the source or kind of evidence, who might not meet fixed requirements but who appear to need special programming to realize their potential.

8. Keep statistics on the characteristics of the students selected. This will allow an assessment of the fairness of the identification process to bilingual and other minority students, females, and other groups sometimes underrepresented in programs for the gifted.

The names of the students selected for gifted programs should be sent to the superintendent and staff members involved. In addition, their parents or guardians must be notified. This is required under Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982. It is recommended that, in addition to this notification, parents' or guardians' approval be obtained to place students in a program for the gifted.

In addition to aiding in the selection of students to participate in programs designed for the gifted, the in-depth assessment can serve as a basis for modifying programs and services to meet the needs of each of the students involved. For instance, the in-depth assessment may indicate that a student is better placed in the regular school program than in a special program for the gifted. However, he or she may have demonstrated mastery of certain skills scheduled to be introduced in the regular program. Such information could be useful to the teacher in planning an alternative assignment while the other students are working on those skills. The selection team should develop procedures to communicate such information to teachers and other staff members.

REALITIES OF PROVIDING GIFTED EDUCATION

The identification process described above is intended to provide a framework that is suitable to most districts, regardless of size, organization, resources, or type of gifted program. Factors such as these will affect the way in which the identification process is implemented.

The purpose of gifted education is to provide each gifted student a differentiated curriculum that encourages the emergence of individual abilities and develops them to the fullest. Ideally, the identification process should locate every gifted student and describe his or her characteristics in ways that aid in offering the student an appropriate educational program. We fall short of these ideals, sometimes because of limits to our knowledge, sometimes because of limited resources.

What can a district do to reduce the negative impact of limited resources on the identification process? First, careful planning of the entire identification process can avoid wasted effort. For example, a clear picture before data collection begins of what data are needed to make good decisions can eliminate the collection of data which will not be used.

Second, other districts are going through, or have gone through, the same process of developing an identification process. Sharing ideas can cut down on trial and error. Existing identification systems from other districts might be adapted for local use.

Third, look for underutilized resources. These may include: (1) school personnel who may wish to play a more active role in a gifted program; (2) community resources, such as advisory groups, libraries, museums, business, industry, social and civic groups, academic institutions, and individual citizens; and (3) professional networks, including other educators of the gifted, state resources, and technical services of various kinds. Some districts are more fortunate than others in the number of resources available. However, most communities have more resources than are generally known or used.

The constraints we face will often limit our efforts and challenge our resourcefulness. But they should not cause us to lose sight of the ideal. Perhaps our solutions to problems created by such limitations can serve as models for the gifted students who benefit from the solutions.

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR IDENTIFYING GIFTED STUDENTS

Organizing to Identify Gifted Students

1. Establish an identification team.

2. Identify sources of data.

3. Orient the staff.

Screening

4. Determine the population to be screened at this time.

5. Select the types of data to be used in screening.

6. Develop a data-gathering and record-keeping plan which describes procedures and persons responsible.

7. Determine the criteria to be used in selecting pupils for further consideration.

8. Collect the data. (This constitutes screening of new entrants as required under Chapter 53 of the Laws of 1980.)

    a. For new entrants, preliminary screening must be completed by December 1, or within 15 days of entrance for those entering after November 15.

    b. Screening of new entrants must be done in each pupil's native language. (This is required by Section 117.3 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. It is recommended for all pupils being screened.)

9. Compile the data on each child.

10. Select "possibly gifted" pupils, using the criteria established in step No. 7.

Referral

11. Send names of "possibly gifted" pupils to the superintendent with reports of findings. (This is required of new entrants under Chapter 53 of the Laws of 1980; it is recommended for all pupils determined to be possibly gifted. This step also constitutes referral under Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982.)

12. Obtain referrals for in-depth assessment from teachers, administrators, parents, and/or other individuals.

13. Notify the parent or guardian of each child referred or found to be possibly gifted in the screening process. Request approval to assess the pupil in depth. (This is required under Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982.)

In-depth Assessment

14. Determine criteria to be used in selecting pupils for special programs or services for the gifted. (This may have been done as part of step No. 7.)

15. Select the types of data to be used in the in-depth assessment.

16. Decide how the data will be used in making decisions about students and programs.

17. Collect the additional data.

18. Select pupils for special programs or services for the gifted.

19. Determine the appropriate placement or program modification for every pupil screened.

Follow-Up

20. Notify the parent or guardian of each pupil selected for special program(s) or service(s). (This is required under Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1982.)

21. Request approval of the parent or guardian to offer the pupil the special program(s) or service(s).

22. Send names of pupils selected for special programs or services to the superintendent, the principals affected, and other staff members designated by the superintendent.

23. Send a report of the assessment to the teacher(s) of each pupil, those not selected for a special program or service as well as those selected.

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